

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3, 4, 7 and 17-20 are in this application and are presented for consideration. By this amendment, Applicant has amended claims 1 and 7. Withdrawn claims 2, 5, 6 and 8-16 have been canceled subject to Applicant's right to file a divisional application to cover the features found in these claims. New claims 17-20 have been added.

Claims 1, 3 and 4 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Hermansson (WO 02/061522).

Applicant would like to bring to the Examiner's attention that the same prior art reference was cited against the Applicant's corresponding European patent application by the European Patent Office. Applicant's European application has since been granted as a result of the claims being amended to provide similar changes as now presented in claim 1 of the present application.

The present invention relates to a locking device. The locking device comprises an adjustable holder 7 that is provided with a recess 16, a stationary contour 9 with a contact surface 12, a pin 8 and a compression spring 21. The pin 8 is disposed in the recess 16 such that the pin 8 can be moved in the recess 16. The pin 8 is subjected to an axial spring force via the compression spring 21. The pin 8 has a pin head 14 that extends out of the recess 16 of the holder 7. At least one centering device 18 is provided between the pin 8 and the holder 7. The centering device 18 has at least one elastically deformable ring 19 that is disposed between the pin 8 and the holder 7 inside the recess 16 such that the ring 19 can be displaced inside the recess 16. The ring 19 includes a surface 22 with a cross section which tapers against the

direction of force of the compression spring 21. The surface of the ring 19 is in contact with a complementary surface 23 on the pin 8. This advantageously provides a centering device that has a compact and simple design. The elastically deformable ring is an essential feature of the invention as it guarantees reliable and uniform centering with a uniform force distribution. Further, the relatively large transmission surfaces of the surfaces of the elastically deformable ring and the pin advantageously keeps the load low on the pin which significantly prevents pressure marks or premature wear and damage to the pin. The prior art as a whole fails to disclose such features or such uniform centering advantages.

Hermansson discloses a centering device for elongated elements consisting of a fixed position-retaining part 13 that has a concave guiding surface 16 and a mobile positioning-retaining part 12 arranged on the elongated element. The mobile position-retaining part 12 has a pin 14 which is spring biased for contact against the concave guiding surface. The pin 14 is arranged in at least one casing 18, and is together with the casing 18 arranged in a cavity 20 in a holder which is fixedly attached to the elongated element. The pin 14 has a pin head 23 protruding out of an opening 24 in a front end of both the casing 18 and the holder. The holder 15 has a seat 38 with a guiding surface 37 for a peripherally conical portion 36 of the casing. This is spring biased in the axial direction so that the conical portion strives to be in contact with the seat of the holder for centering of the casing and the pin relative to the longitudinal axis 21 of the holder.

Hermansson fails to teach and fails to suggest the combination of a centering device comprising at least one elastically deformable ring, which is arranged between a pin and a

holder within the recess of the holder as claimed. Hermansson merely discloses a casing 18 arranged in a cavity 20 of a holder 15. The casing 18 used in Hermansson disadvantageously requires a large diameter for the cavity 20 in the holder as well as a large depth of the cavity 20 because the casing is arranged around the pin and the individual sections of the casing 18 require a certain length in the axial direction for the necessary bending. This fails to provide a compact design. This also does not allow for clamping to take place for centering over the entire circumference of the pin and disadvantageously allows shifting forces to be completely transmitted via the sleeve, which significantly risks damaging the sleeve. The Office Action takes the position that the casing 18 of Hermansson is the equivalent of the centering device of the present invention and relies on page 5, lines 4-23 of Hermansson to teach that the casing 18 has at least one elastically deformable ring as featured in the claimed combination. However, the casing 18 of Hermansson fails to have an elastically deformable ring that is located within a recess of a holder such that the ring is located between a pin and the holder as claimed. Page 5, lines 4-23 of Hermansson does not provide any teaching or suggestion for the casing 18 having an elastically deformable ring. Page 5, lines 4-23 of Hermansson only discloses that the casing 18 at the opening 24 is slightly elastic radially, but fails to make any mention of the casing 18 having an elastically deformable ring that is arranged within the cavity 20 of the holder. Compared with Hermansson, the centering device of the present invention has at least one elastically deformable ring that is arranged between a holder and a pin within a recess of the holder. According to the present invention, the elastically deformable ring has a surface that has a cross section tapering against the direction of the force

of a compression spring wherein the surface engages a complementary surface on the pin. This advantageously guarantees reliable and uniform centering of the pin with a uniform force distribution. Hermansson fails to provide such uniform force distribution advantages since the casing 18 of Hermansson does not have an elastically deformable ring with a surface having a tapered cross section that is in contact with a complementary surface on the pin head 23. Even assuming the extended portion 36 of Hermansson is the equivalent of the surface of the elastically deformable ring as featured in the present invention, the extended portion 36 is not located within the cavity 20 of the holder as claimed. As such, the prior art as a whole takes a completely different approach and fails to teach or suggest each and every feature of the claimed combination. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner favorably consider claim 1 and all claims that depend thereon.

Applicant has added new claims 17-20. New independent claims 17 and 19 provide for features similar to those found in amended claim 1, but in different claim language. Specifically, new independent claim 17 provides for the spring being in contact with the elastically deformable ring. New independent claim 19 clarifies that the spring is contact with the holder and the elastically deformable ring. These features are not disclosed in Hermansson. New dependent claims 18 and 20 have been added to include the features found in claim 7. Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner favorably consider new claims 17-20.

Favorable consideration on the merits is requested.

Respectfully submitted  
for Applicant,



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